

## **Working and Communicating**

### **With the Community**

In addition to their role as advisors to the Council, Boards and Commission members serve as liaisons between the City and the general public. Each member functions as a communication link between the community and the City, explaining City programs and recommendations, as well as providing a channel for citizen expression.

The City has a community outreach program under the Neighborhood and Community Services division of the Office of the City Manager. Boards and Commission members are encouraged to obtain information and learn about the various neighborhoods, community groups and events in order to assist them in becoming better advisors to the City Council.

Board and commission meetings should be conducted in a manner that is conducive to a productive exchange of ideas and perspectives. A non-threatening atmosphere should be prevalent, and steps should be taken to ensure that members of the public are free to express their views without fear of ridicule or belittlement by anyone with an opposing viewpoint.

Members should conduct themselves in a manner that demonstrates fairness and professionalism. Members should be considerate of all interests and value differences of opinion. Additionally, members should remain open-minded, objective, and make no judgment until all of the available evidence pertaining to an issue has been submitted.

Members of the public are also expected to conform to an acceptable standard of conduct. Any person who willfully interrupts a public meeting or acts so as to render the orderly conduct of the meeting infeasible may be barred from further attendance at the meeting by the board or commission or by the Chairperson. An individual so barred may not return for the remainder of the meeting unless permission is granted by a majority vote of the board or commission.

### **With the City Council**

The purpose of the Boards and Commissions is to expand the opportunity for citizen input and participation, study issues, and make recommendations to the City Council. The Council possesses the ultimate political and legal responsibility for the conduct of local government and the overall welfare of the community. As a result, the City Council may not accept all of the recommendations made by a Board or Commission. Council actions which vary from Board or Commission recommendations do not imply a lack of confidence or disinterest in the board or commission's advice. Council

members must weigh the guidance provided by Commissions and other advisory bodies against a broader scope of considerations as they reach the decisions for which they are responsible.

Although a Board or Commission may disagree with the final decision the Council makes, the Board or Commission should not act in any manner contrary to the established policy adopted by the Council.

If a Board or Commission wants to make a recommendation to the Council, they need to have the item on their agenda and vote collectively. Staff will write up that portion of the minutes to present to the City Council during a Council meeting, or the Chair can include this in a letter to present the Board or Commission's recommendation to the Council members. If a member wants to address the Council on his/her own, they may do so during the public appearance portion of the Council meeting, but they must make it clear that they are not speaking on behalf of the Board or Commission. Since all the members are citizens, they may address the Council as citizens in whatever form they are comfortable with (email, letter, phone, etc.).

Council conduct with Boards and Commissions is covered in the City's Code of Conduct for Elected Officials adopted in April 2000. This section is provided under Tab 3 - Policies, Procedures and Guidelines, of this Handbook.

### **With Your Members and Other Board/Commission Members**

Boards and Commissions achieve optimum participation when members strive to establish an effective working relationship with each other by showing respect for each other's viewpoints and allowing others the opportunity to fully present their views before making comments. Supportive relationships with fellow members, based upon mutual respect, will be essential to the Boards or Commission's success. In areas where there is an overlap of jurisdiction between the various Boards and Commissions, it is important that liaison be undertaken to insure proper perspective of the different viewpoints that are of concern to all who are involved. Appointment of liaison representation to other Boards and Commissions will serve as a communications link. Further, joint meetings with the City Council and other Boards and Commissions may be mutually beneficial wherever the need arises.

### **With City Staff**

City staff serve Boards and Commissions in an advisory capacity—much the same as the Board/Commission serves the Council. Staff members are selected on the basis of their technical and professional abilities and are expected to provide Boards and Commissions with recommendations based upon their professional analysis of the situation, regardless of personal opinion or consideration of political consequence. It is not expected that every staff recommendation will be followed; however, because of staff's technical expertise, full consideration should be given to its recommendation.

The staff liaison, or his/her designee, attends all meetings of the Board or Commission, prepares the agenda, acts as a technical advisor, and finalizes the minutes for approval by the group at its next meeting. Requests for information or support should be directed to the staff liaison, not directly to other City staff.

Members should be aware of staff's responsibility to provide professional advice to the City Council. In instances where a staff member disagrees with a Board or Commission recommendation, he or she is obligated to advise the City Council, through the City Manager, of his or her technical recommendation. The City Council values both the opinions of the Board and Commission and the staff since each has an important perspective—staff express opinions from a strictly technical viewpoint, while Boards and Commissions provide insight into the attitudes of the community.

The staff assigned to a Board or Commission also handles administrative duties such as preparing meeting agendas, staff reports, and meeting minutes. Staff members are not considered members of a Board or Commission and have no power to vote in Board and Commission matters. Because of their support position, staff does not respond to questions from the public at a meeting unless requested to do so by the Chairperson. Board and Commission members may not direct staff to initiate programs, conduct major studies, or establish official policy without the approval of the City Council.